1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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ciety's adjustment to the natural environment. There will be no attempt to look for the origins of totemism, but rather our effort will be to determine what the totemic system is, how it works, and finally by analysis to ascertain what meanings lie implicit in the thinking and behavior of the religious activities of these people. 121

The task of understanding the place of the totemic myths and rituals in Murngin society and their fundamental meanings in the thought and life of the people demands that we first determine whether there is a primary or possibly an intrinsic relation between the acted ceremony or ritual, and the myth or oral rite. If there is, and it can be demonstrated that they are but two parts of one social phenomenon in Murngin culture, then we can turn our attention to the more fundamental meanings of these sacred phenomena and their place in the general religion of the people. Our order of procedure, then, will first lead us to the question of whether the Wawilak Creator Sisters myth and certain great ceremonies of the Murngin are generically connected. The same procedure will be used for the other fundamental myths and what seem to be their ritual constellations.

It should be stated explicitly that the thesis of this chapter is that, in meaning, the Wawilak myth is fundamental to, and organically related to, a certain group of rituals found in Murngin religious thought. The dramatic rituals express the oral rites.

Generally speaking, scientific method in the social sciences should include:

A. *Gathering of data:* an objective collection of the ethnographic facts from the whole of the society and from all aspects of the culture in as complete detail as possible. (*Activity in the field.*)

B. *Classifying* as like and unlike, and "near and far," *the materials* which have been collected and which in the realm of social organization form structural parts or configurations of the society being examined. (*Activity in the laboratory, checked by renewed activity in the field.*)

C. *Propounding of final generalizations* on the basis of the simpler generalizations of B. (*Activity in the laboratory.*)

SCIENTIFIC METHOD AS APPLIED TO THE ANALYSIS OF MURNGIN TOTEMISM

A. *Gathering of Data*

As many descriptions of the various ceremonies as time and oppor- 124

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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tunity in the field would allow were collected. *Before* seeing a ceremony I interviewed, as many times as possible, the leader and principal participants. *While* the ceremony was taking place I wrote careful descriptions and interviewed bystanders, or participants if possible. *After* the event I went over the two accounts and checked for discrepancies, and again interviewed. I repeated this many times. I collected a great number of accounts of the same myth and observed the variations and conformities of the several accounts. I made a detailed and accurate observation of the natural conditions to which the society is adapted—in particular, climatic changes and the adjustment of nature to them—and obtained native ideas and evaluations of the various phases of the weather and other changes in nature.[2]

B. *Classifying the Materials*

I analyzed the native accounts of myths and determined that they fell into dramatic sections or "movements," and these again into episodes. I lettered and gave descriptive titles to the dramatic sections (three in the Wawilak myth); and I numbered consecutively and summarized descriptively each of the episodes (ten in the Wawilak).

I analyzed the ceremonies and determined that these likewise fell into dramatic sections, and the sections again into groups of episodes (cohering elements of the rituals). The sections I lettered and gave descriptive names. Each subdivision (group of episodes) of a section I numbered, summarized analytically, and described fully. At the end of each *section* I wrote in the native interpretation of that section of the ceremony with respect to the myth.

In collecting these interpretations I used a free association method and did not question directly, allowing the native informants to tell what they thought about the ritual either while it was being enacted or when they were discussing it before or after its performance. These native interpretations constituted, then, a detailed study on the first level of interpretation, based on the meanings, beliefs, and attitudes the natives held explicitly and consciously about the various parts of the myths and rituals.

I ascertained that there is a connection between the myth and ritual, first by observing that the native mind *is* aware that there is a *general* connection (even though this awareness is only rationalization).[3]

[2] The Marndiella, Ulmark, and Yiritja Narra were not observed as completely and are not as completely described as the other ceremonies.

[3] In the earlier half of my field work I was unaware of the full significance of the

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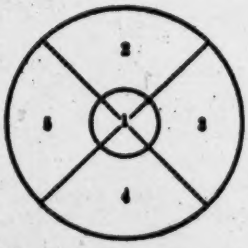
use of an elaborated form of the Ogden and Richards system for the analysis of individual logic.[4]

The first myth-ritual constellation to be presented under the foregoing method of analysis is the Wawilak myth and its interlocked ceremonies. It is represented diagrammatically in the following chart:



1. The Wawilak Myth
2. The Djungguan
3. The Gunabibi
4. The Ulmark
5. The Marndiella

CHART X.—CONSTELLATION OF THE WAWILAK MYTH AND ITS RITUALS

The Wawilak myth is of extreme importance to the Murngin and is always present in their thinking. I had been in the Murngin country for only three days when I heard of it. The narrator, Yanindja, leader of the eastern Djirin clan, said, "This story belongs to the Djungguan. They [myth and ritual] are all the same thing." At the first circumcision ceremony I saw, clansmen from many parts of the country were present; and in explanation of their presence I was told by the leader, "People come to a Djungguan ceremony from everywhere because when that snake swallowed those two women he stood up right to the sky and sang out and people heard him from every place." (He meant that all the clans come to attend the ceremony.)

This most important of the myths was collected a great number of times and all the fundamental features and most of the secondary ones were always present, no matter how poor the narrator. The occasion was always just before, during, or just after the ceremonies supposed to be connected with it.

The story is primarily an account of how before the time of present-day man the two Wawilak sisters and their children marched out of the southern inland after committing clan incest, and came to the Liaalaomir totemic hole. Here the older sister profaned the pool of the Great Python by accidentally allowing her menstrual blood to fall

[4] *The Meaning of Meaning*, by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, with an appendix by Bronislaw Malinowski, has been a great help to me in working out the ideas expressed in this chapter.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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CHAPTER VI

KUNAPIPI DREAMS

Kunapipi ritual and ideology, like all other aspects of native life and thought, find expression through the medium of dreams. The study of these requires not only personal aequaintance with the individuals whose dreams are recorded, but also sound knowledge of their cultural and traditional background. Their behaviour patterns must be compared with those of other representatives of the group; all social factors likely to contribute towards a particular dream should be analysed, and the individual's personality and psychological approach taken into consideration. In addition, the natives' own theory and interpretations of dreams must be considered.

For several months, at Yirrkalla, the dreams of a number of adult males were recorded daily. During the initial period of field-work, it was necessary to have approximately thirty male informants, each chosen for some specific reason; one was a headman of a certain linguistic group, another an artist, a wood-carver, a song-man, a leader of the Djanggawul or of the Kunapipi rituals, and so on. With such a group readily available it was convenient to record their dreams each morning while studying their social background. At the same time an intimacy grew up between the field-worker and the informants, so that mental reservations were reduced to a minimum. Detailed case-histories of each individual were compiled over the period of work, and the sequence of events within the social group was observed in relation to their dreams; these events were apparently modified or accentuated according to a man's peculiar background and associations. What had begun as a tentative experiment developed into an important aspect of study, which revealed the natives' psychological adjustment to their society under the impact of Misson and European contact. However, it was found necessary after a certain period to restrict the time spent on this work, since it had shown a tendency to dominate, and even in part to exclude, other aspects of equal if not greater importance.

It was however of great value to have this opportunity of studying hundreds of dreams, recorded in sequence, of a number of these aborigines, and to observe the wide range of subjects concerned, together with the themes which reflected each man's particular

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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124 159 787 approach to life. The dreams ranged from long mundane narratives, relating food-collecting exploits, to matters of sacred concern, sexual adventures, feuds and fighting, spirits, Spirit-Landings (referring to the conception of a wife or some female relative), sickness and death, and dreams reflecting Mission contact, showing conflict between the indigenous and the introduced culture. The most important of these were those of Mission contact, contrasting the native religion with Christianity, and introducing fantastic conceptions of God, Jesus and the missionaries. On the other hand, a great many of these dreams were concerned primarily with indigenous religion, and it is these dreams that have assumed great importance to the natives themselves. Men "dream out" the meanings of their sacred ritual, coming spiritually into direct contact with the Ancestral Beings. They perform the rituals in dreams, use sacred emblems in unconventional ways, and also dream additions to their rituals and totemic designs, additions, of course, based on traditional patterns. Many sacred designs are altered and added to because of dreams, although the original totemic pattern is retained. Sacred songs, too, are influenced directly and indirectly by dreaming; for the Ancestral Being who has inspired a particular song-cycle may suggest an addition or modification to a headman during a dream.

124 787 159 828 The natives' own interpretation of their dreams, apart from those which have a bearing on the sacred life, varies considerably. It may reflect a man's brooding over an event, or thinking about someone: "I was thinking about such and such, and dreamt this"; "I was worrying about so and so and dreamt about them"; "My child is sick, and I dreamt this" (often something apparently quite unrelated to the supposed "cause" of dreaming). A death in the camp will inspire most men and women to dream about the deceased's spirit, about some other death (in the past or the future), about mortuary ceremonies, clan songs and the Spirit Lands of the dead.

A man's dissatisfaction with his marital arrangements will be expressed through a series of sexual dreams, while an elopement in the camp will produce dreams relating to feuds and fighting, quarrels and arguments, or allegoric dreams through which such events are said to be mirrored. Other dreams portend future events. But when camp life is running smoothly, involved dreams of a secular or sacred nature are interpreted as, "I was hungry last night and dreamt that"; or, "I was worrying over some tobacco"; or, "Someone stole my supper"; and so on. These interpretations, as for the Kunapipi dreams which follow, are often put forward irrespective of the context of the dream. The performance of large ceremonies like the *dua* and *jiritja naru*, the Wauwalak rituals and the like, when the whole camp participates, produces among both men and women a crop of dreams that relate mainly to the relevant rituals, although a mass of contradictory interpretative material is put forward.

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Dreams are rarely "extraordinary"[1] when they occur in Yirrkalla life; they are related to the ordinary round of events, and are definitely not placed in the category of the supernatural. They are an adjunct of normal and conventional living; and just as a man's body and spirit have experiences in the waking life, so the spirit (separated now from material ties) has similar experiences (within the range of an individual's knowledge) in the dreaming sphere, where time and space are ignored. The aborigines' theory is that the spirit, during sleep, is released from the body, and during a dream wanders in timeless space, into the stream of the Eternal Dreamtime.

* * * *

We may turn now to our main theme, the Kunapipi dreams, for the general question of Yirrkalla dream life requires a separate study.

Only three Kunapipi dreams will be considered here: these, among the many hundreds of dreams recorded, were the only ones really relevant to this discussion. Most of those dreams which referred to sacred and ceremonial aspects were associated with other Wauwalak rituals, like the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak*, but more particularly with the "higher" sacred emblems and ritual of Djanggawul, Laintjung and Banaitja and so on. The reason for this paucity of Kunapipi dreams is possibly that this cult has not as yet a really firm grip of the people's minds, as have more typically indigenous forms. It consists, as we have said, of introduced ritual superimposed on traditional mythology, and from that consideration alone would not be so deeply ingrained in the culture as other and far older local rituals. On the other hand, the three dreams set out here were inspired by lengthy conversations on various aspects of the Kunapipi. Later, when certain Kunapipi ceremonies were in operation, and a great many people of both sexes were brought into the sphere of its influence, it was not possible to record dreams. We may assume, however, that the performance of the Kunapipi would produce related dreaming; for while other ceremonies were being held, it was found that all those concerned invariably had relevant dreams. An important adjunct in the study of native religious life should be the analysis of informants' and participants' dreams; this should not be confined to one sex alone, for we have shown elsewhere the important part played by women, particularly in the Fertility cults, and their dreams reflect their approach to ceremonial (as well as to secular) life.

These Kunapipi dreams belonged to two men. One was Banggalawi,[2] a *dua* Djambarpingu *mata*, Ralwia *mala* man, a middle-aged ceremonial headman, well versed in both Djanggawul and Wauwalak ritual, and a leader of the Milingimbi Kunapipi side. The other

1. L. Warner's Appendix on Dreams (*op. cit.* pp. 511-12) is inadequate.
2. The Bengaliwo of L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 68, 182 *et seq.*

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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language. Their society is constructed on the moiety principle, and descent is in all cases primarily patrilineal. There is no clearly defined tribe, but a series of linguistic groups associated with clans; all of these may be called, collectively, the Wulamba bloc of the Miwaitj language group (referring to the sum total of the different dialects). Yirrkalla is situated on the extreme north-east corner of Arnhem Land between Melville Bay and Cape Arnhem, and Aborigines gather there from places as far distant as Blue Mud and Caledon and Trial Bays, Rose River, and Woodah and Groote Islands in the south and south-east, and Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, Elcho, English Company and Wessel Islands in the north-west. Milingimbi is in the Crocodile Island group on the central-north coast; it is also a meeting place for members of many groups, particularly those from the mainland around the Blyth, Goyder and Woolen Rivers.

Virtually all the writer's field work has been carried out through the medium of the native language, both at Yirrkalla and Milingimbi. Knowledge of local dialects is essential in social anthropological work, and particularly in a study of Aboriginal religion. Field work at Yirrkalla was carried out in 1946–7 and at Milingimbi in 1950 (a total period of thirteen months actually working on the field in this particular region); the first period was made possible by grants from the Australian National Research Council, and was under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, while the latter period was financed by grants from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney and the Department of Anthropology of the same University. Writing up of this material was also made possible by grants from the Research Committee.

So many informants have helped in the process of collecting the data presented here that a list of their names would be tiresome and meaningless to the reader. Not only main *dua* moiety headmen, but also those of the *jiritja* moiety, contributed; and these were members of many linguistic groups. In addition, attitudes of local Aboriginal women towards this religious cult were discussed with them by my wife (Catherine Berndt), and this aided directly the analysis of certain sections. This study of the Djanggawul, then, does not express solely the information and attitudes of male natives, but takes into account both male and female elements in the culture. The practice in recording the interlinear phonetic renderings of the songs was for informants belonging to a particular area through which the Djanggawul passed to put forward those songs themselves, for it was their country and they were expected to have more complete knowledge of the songs. In this way, each

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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115 part was presented by the most capable leaders and song men
124 available for the particular territory concerned. This was the case
126 also in recording the myth, which unfortunately cannot here be presented in its phonetic rendering. All features of the myth and songs were collectively discussed, and interpretations made by the Aborigines themselves.

121 A considerable amount of thought has gone into the question of
128 presenting the available data on the Djanggawul. It has finally been decided to present as much as possible of the 'raw' material without, apart from interpretation and partial analysis, engaging in theoretical discussion, for material of this type obviously lends itself to such treatment. It is our contention that the rôle of the anthropologist in the Australian Aboriginal field should be one of recording data, and of presenting these in an accessible form, so that the maximum amount of material may be available for the consideration of students interested primarily in theory. That is not to say that we disparage that particular branch of anthropological science, but that we ourselves are more intimately concerned with Australian Aboriginal problems as such and, although taking into account the wider implication of our material, we must of necessity restrict our outlook to some extent. This, to us, is an important point, for we in Australia are acutely aware of the limitations of available anthropological data. Considering the geographical extent of the Australian continent, and the apparent diversity of Aboriginal cultural groups within it, we must admit that our knowledge of these societies is sparse. It is our duty, as we see it, to compensate in some degree for this deficiency. We do of course realize that, although our problems seem to us momentous, they diminish somewhat with distance, and when viewed in relation to the sum total of human experience throughout the world they become of much less pressing significance.

000 During the last two decades Australian Anthropology has received an impetus, principally through the personal efforts of Professors A. P. Elkin and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and the Australian National Research Council has sent on to the field a series of anthropologists: this activity, and its results, have helped to counteract in some degree the errors of the past. Nevertheless, we in Australia are aware that although much has been done, there still remains more to do.

To say 'errors of the past' is not to disparage the monumental works of Sir Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, Carl Strehlow and others. What they lacked in anthropological method they made up in energy, and in their power to stimulate interest among anthropologists and others; they inspired, for instance, Émile Durkheim

magical rites and spells, it does not involve the co-operation of spirit familiars.

The majority of informants stated that the cult of the *marrngit* is not a hereditary one, and they asserted that although the son of a *marrngitmirri* father may also be *marrngitmirri*, membership of the cult does not necessarily pass from father to son. But at least one informant of Wanguri clan, a clan of Mindjikai *barpuro*, declared that in his own clan, of which the principal territory is at Arnhem Bay, a little to the south and east of Elcho Island, the cult of the *marrngit* was hereditary and did pass from father to son. On controversial issues of this kind, long discussions often took place among the old men who acted as informants, and finally they would reach agreement and give me their verdict. Far from being careless or merely anxious to please, they took great pains to check information by referring to people who possessed specialized knowledge, and took much trouble in settling any doubtful point. My informants declared that the *marrngit* was also hereditary in the Burara tribe, where, however, the cult of the *ragalk* was also established and was certainly dominant. Some conflict, or difference of opinion, does occur in matters of this kind particularly in north-eastern Arnhem Land where there is no hard and fast, or orthodox, view, supported by a large body of opinion.

This means that, as might be expected, in the absence of a written language or an organized body to formalize belief, there is necessarily some degree of flexibility, some scope for individual ideas, and within the atypical, intensely segmentary, social organization of eastern Arnhem Land, this variability tends to be emphasized. Even in matters of kinship, which concerns the entire group, since it regulates all behaviour, differences sometimes occurred and the people would call in old men and submit an intricate or knotty problem to them in the way that I have mentioned above.

It was intended originally to confine this paper to a short account of the *marrngitmirri*, translated from the statements of the medicinemen themselves, and to follow this with descriptions of the *marrngit*, which are shown in the accompanying plates of actual drawings of their spirit familiars made by these medicinemen. But my attention has been drawn to an article by the late Revd. T. T. Webb published some years ago, 'The Making of a Marrngit,'[2] which contains some errors and misconceptions, and I have therefore extended the scope of this article to discuss the relationship of the medicineman and sorcerer in Arnhem Land and the roles and the distribution of these cults.

In the opening paragraph of this article Mr. Webb says: 'In east Arnhem Land there are two classes of magicians

[p.97(c)]

754 speak and to hear most of what was said except when it was idiomatic or spoken very quickly, I made the following note: 'The cult of the *kalka* or *ragalk* properly belongs to the area of Arnhem Land extending from the Burara of Cape Stewart westwards. It did not exist as a cult to the east of this territory, although greatly feared by these people, but it was an important influence to the west as well as among the interior tribes, the Raimbar'ngo, the Ritar'ngo and others from the Derby Creek, lying south and west of Cape Stewart and the Liverpool River.'

And to this record, the following significant note was added: 'It was unknown to the Tjambarpoingo, the Kalbanuk and to most of the Mandjikai—the "sandfly people"—with the exception of the Wallamango, the latter a people of the Crocodile Islands who claim affinity with Mandjikai *barpuro*.' Wanguri clan is also linked with the same group. *Barpuro*3 is a term that is difficult to define in the intricate and aberrant social grouping of this area.
617 It is applied in eastern Arnhem Land to loosely integrated clans often occupying discontinuous tracts of territory, geographically sometimes widely separated, but nevertheless having in common at least some vital and significant part of their total totemic heritage.

124 The immense complexity of this social grouping caused many lengthy digressions among informants and frequently interrupted the collection of long texts in the language to enable difficult points as to the bonds between groups to be clarified and the resultant effects upon the attitudes of
754 people made clear to me. Because the cult of the *ragalk* or
184 sorcerer was known to the Yanango of Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group—a clan of Maringo *malla*—who were on the borderline between the east and the west, with many cultural differences as well as differences in social organization, the impact of the *kalka* upon them was not as sudden or as destructive as it was upon the people of Elcho Island. My informants stressed the fact that the Ritar'ngo of the interior, who occupied a big area of country lying between the Liverpool River to the north and the Wilton (a tributary of the upper Roper) in the south, knew and practised the cult of the *kalka*, as did their neighbours the Raimbar'ngo.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the two cults,
[114] the cults of the *marrngit* and the *kalka*, are not generally complementary and do not, as Mr. Webb's account implies, occur together among the same people, with the possible exception of the Yanango and Wallamango and the neighbouring Burara. But the Yanango and Wallamango are marginal groups and this has an important influence upon their attitudes towards certain culture traits, and the emphasis placed upon differences tends to exaggerate these.

756 The more or less benevolent *marrngitmirri*, the typical medicineman, a kind of general practitioner, with his spirit familiars, is characteristic of the region east of the Crocodile Islands, extending to Cape Arnhem, where the cult of the
717 *ragalk* does not exist.
734 I have stated that prior to the transfer of the Mission
177 from Elcho Island west to the Crocodile Group, the people
184 of the Tjambarpoingo (*dua* moicty) and Kopapoingo-

[p.98(B)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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it to invisible wandering ghosts. They haunt old scenes after death, and the signs of their whereabouts are easily recognized from their mischievous habits. Burramurra was our interpreter and spent a lot of time with us, and one day, when he went 'walk-about', a ghost hid his dinner. He had found a nest of turtle eggs and covered them with sand whilst he went for oysters; on his return it seemed that some of the eggs had disappeared, and when he had searched in vain for Yulengor footprints he naturally concluded that some mali had been at work. Two weeks later he heard that a relative had died, and thereupon concluded that the mali of the dead relative had taken the eggs to show that he was a spirit and no longer in the flesh.

Jirring was the best-built and most attractive warrior I have ever seen. He was tall and powerful, yet he burst into my camp one night and agitatedly stammered: 'Ngarakala gurapan bureiala, bukorjulni'—in other words: 'Please give me a lantern.' When I asked him why he wanted it, he said that a mali had run over his chest and wakened him, and he was convinced that it was the ghost of his father, who was away visiting in a distant horde. I had seen his father only a few days previously, so I told him that he must have been dreaming, but he was morbidly confident that his father had been killed and that his spirit had returned with the news. Nor could Jirring be convinced otherwise, until his father returned to camp and he both saw and touched him.

On another occasion, on our way back to Yirrkala after midnight, several men and I were filing along a bush track and saw fires on a hillside. I imagined they were the smouldering remains of recent bush-fires, but no such simple explanation occurred to the nomads, who immediately lowered their voices and questioningly murmured to each other: 'Mali? Mali?' On arrival at the station we saw that something was amiss, for the whole camp was wailing and singing. We were told that a raid had been made over one